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AND RENDITION FLIGHTS, GLOBAL ECONOMY, EAST ASIA, INDIA AND

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RUSSIA, INDIA AND ITER, INDO-U.S. RELATIONS, INDO-PAK
RELATIONS AND KASHMIR, PAKISTAN; NEW DELHI

ALLEGATIONS OF GWOT SECRET PRISONS AND RENDITION FLIGHTS

1. "OF CAPTORS AND THEIR CAPTIVES," analysis in the December
9 pro-BJP right-of-center THE PIONEER by Anuradha Dutt.

a. "It has been a while since the civilized world stopped reacting to the United States-led war against Islamist terrorism. But the latest expose of secret jails and interrogation centers for captives across Europe, North Africa and other places again provokes serious questions about the true intent of the exercise, as well as the manner in which it is being conducted. The power caucus ruling America has not succeeded in its second term to dispel scepticism surrounding its objectives as frequent revelations about misinformation campaigns against Iraq, . . . For the present, human rights watchdogs, activists and empowered individuals in the free world must probe the detention of terror suspects in 'a third country' by agents of the American bloc, and the use of techniques of torture against them . . . Reports of a network of such CIA-run centers in eight European nations . . . if these allegations are proven to be true. Reports further charge that even countries like Britain and Germany have unwittingly been used for transfer of US prisoners, with their airspace being violated by planes carrying captives and airports being deployed too in the process of 'extraordinary rendition' . . . Though CIA sources claim that these terror jails have been shut down after the reports appeared, such denial is only to be expected . . . In view of the outrage in West Europe and Britain over the alleged American lapse, India must be cautious about allowing US planes to refuel at airports and fly over Indian airspace. As it is, the Left Front Government in West Bengal has been vocally against joint Indo-US military exercises. However, these disclosures by the US media merit serious attention since no free country can afford to become an accomplice, willingly or otherwise, in perpetrating human rights abuses. Closer home, further disclosure that Abu Zabaydah, one of Osama bin Laden's aides, was taken to Thailand after his capture in Pakistan and held in a warehouse on an active airbase, should warn the UPA Government about the perils of aligning too closely with the United States.

b. "Apart from then being reduced to the position of being one of the superpower's numerous satellites across Asia,

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India would also further jeopardize its own security interests by coming directly into the adversary's line of fire. The insurgency in Jammu & Kashmir has already taken a heavy toll of men and resources. While the US can always be a useful economic and strategic ally, there is no reason to bend over backwards to accommodate its interests, Unfortunately, the functioning of the Manmohan Singh Government tends to foster the impression that while it is at the helm, our independent status faces the threat of getting diluted."

----- GLOBAL ECONOMY-WTO MEET -----

2. "CLEARING COBWEBS IN HONGKONG," analysis in the December

9 centrist THE TIMES OF INDIA by T.K. Bhaumik working with Reliance Industries." "The Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference, to be held in Hong Kong on December 13-18, 2005, is important in view of its implications on the ill-fated Doha negotiations. In the four years since its launch in September 2001, Doha negotiations have been a story of serial failures. The Hong Kong Ministerial is primarily about a review of the state of Doha negotiations, especially since the framework agreement of July 2004, also known as the July package ... What ails Doha negotiations today is a wide divergence of positions on agriculture and NAMA, while services negotiations suffer from lack of willingness to make meaningful offers on market access. The extent of divergence, as is reflected in the Draft Ministerial Text of November 26, 2005, does not provide any hope for convergence during the deliberations in Hong Kong ... In May 2005, under the leadership of the FIPs, the members agreed to adopt an approach to conversion of specific tariffs on agricultural products into ad valorem equivalents. This has been the only progress so far on Doha negotiations since the Cancun Ministerial in September 2003. The magic of the FIPs, however, cannot be expected to work in Hong Kong ... The US, the EU, and Brazil-India combine can rescue the agriculture negotiations from the cobweb of difficulties and forge a consensus on the desired framework. Will they agree to undertake the rescue operation? Annex A of the Draft Text does not inspire much confidence that FIPs will be able to hammer out a deal. Whether other members will happily agree to accept any deal worked out by the FIPs is also an important issue. Even if the US, EU and Brazil-India combine come to terms with each other, voices of other developing countries, especially the African viewpoints, cannot be overlooked. Given the complexities involved in agriculture

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negotiations, the Hong Kong Ministerial runs the risk of ending inconclusively. This would not necessarily mean a collapse of the dialogue. The ministers can hope to claim some achievements, if they focus mainly on agriculture and try to bridge the gaps as much as possible on the three key areas - domestic support, export subsidy and market access. In order to facilitate subsequent negotiations, they would also need to agree on delinking the negotiations on agriculture, NAMA and services and treat each as stand-alones. It is only then that we can expect acceleration of the pace of Doha negotiations in the aftermath of the Ministerial. Nobody expects the Ministerial to bridge all differences, but it will be judged by whether it succeeds in imparting a positive momentum and facilitating completion of Doha negotiations by the end of 2006."

EAST ASIA

3. "DEMOCRACY CALLING," editorial in the December 9 pro-BJP right-of-center THE PIONEER. "The latent desire for democracy that exists in mainland China and Hong Kong remains undiminished though daunting memories of the Tiananmen Square massacre are yet to fade from public memory. As much was evident in Hong Kong last weekend when tens of thousands of people took to the streets, protesting against the slow pace of political reforms that were promised by Beijing when Britain handed its former colony back to China in 1997 ... The protest came in the wake of

Beijing's declaration that China alone could decide whether Hong Kong needed electoral reforms ... It seems the Government - like colonial regimes of the past - has perfected the art of offering palliatives through high-sounding political reform packages, like doubling the size of the legislature, without giving power to the people ... It is nobody's contention that China has not ushered in political change in the past few years ... It would, however, be incorrect to expect the Chinese Government to grant, at this moment, any substantive concessions to Hong Kong because it would embolden democratic forces in mainland China. Moreover, Beijing is apprehensive of losing its influence over Hong Kong if a popular Government is elected since it would not pander to party bosses and their interests. Curiously, the US, which has been squandering billions of dollars on regime change and democracy in West Asia, has refused to react with any enthusiasm to Hong Kong's desire for political freedom ... Obviously, economics and geo-politics are far more potent in influencing American

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policy than the US's professed faith in democracy and freedom. In a sense, Beijing's duplicity is no less contemptible than that of Washington."

----- INDIA AND RUSSIA -----

4. "A NEW START FOR INDIA AND RUSSIA," editorial in the December 9 centrist THE HINDU. "India's national interests demand a strengthening and deepening of friendly ties with Russia. The emphasis on energy security during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Moscow this week marks the opening of what promises to be an exciting new chapter in the bilateral relationship ... Given Washington's interest in the matter, Moscow is understandably cautious. In the short term, India's main interest is in securing supplies of Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) for Tarapur. In the medium to long term, there is the question of additional reactors for Koodankulam as well as new nuclear power projects. In the past, Russia's efforts at pushing the supply envelope with India were thwarted by American opposition in the Nuclear Suppliers Group. But with Washington looking for ways to open the door to nuclear commerce, Moscow does not wish to be left behind. Russia will be happy if the July 18 agreement is implemented smoothly - President Putin said as much at the joint press conference in Moscow - but the two countries will be looking at a backup plan in case the agreement runs into trouble ... If there is one weakness in the relationship, it is the failure of the two countries to take effective measures to increase the level of bilateral non-defence trade. There are enormous procedural barriers in the way of Indian businesses penetrating the Russian market. Bilateral trade is dwarfed by the commerce China does with both India and Russia and there is little prospect of any dramatic increase in the near future ... Moscow believes, quite reasonably, that a softening of visa restrictions for Indian businesspersons must be accompanied by New Delhi accepting responsibility for the flow of illegal migrants into Russia. In the meantime, state-run oil and gas companies will be the torch-bearers of the new economic dimension in the bilateral relationship."

5. "CEMENTING TIES WITH RUSSIA" editorial in December 9, 2005, Mumbai-based, left-of-center, THE FREE PRESS JOURNAL:
"The Prime Minister's recent visit to Russia was a testimonial to the durability of the friendship between the two countries. Indo-Soviet ties have all along stood the test of time. Even after the break up of the Soviet Union

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and the Emergence of several independent republics, India and Russia have remained close friends thanks to the duly felt mutual needs and concerns of both Moscow and New Delhi.. The remarkable truth is that India and Russia have had no conflict of interests, barring an occasional, albeit minor, quibble over foreign policy issues. Yes, India has been equally generous in accommodating Russian concerns, be it in the matter of surplus rupees at the end of the rupee trade between the two countries or the one-sided fixation of the rupee-rouble exchange rate in the recent past, and has supported Moscow in the international fora in the face of its high-handedness towards its old Cold War allies. This relationship has endured the test of most trying times. It is therefore of utmost importance that they nurture it further by building on the existing structures for attaining their common economic, political and geo-strategic goals."

6. "OTHER SUMS," editorial in December 9 centrist THE TELEGRAPH: "The emphasis of Manmohan Singh, on the long and warm relationship of India and Russia, was the natural route into discussions about close connections in a changed and changing world. The past could be seen as a guarantor of optimism for the future. But the change in the equations of global power in a world where the structure of the economy has changed too would need altered premises of understanding even in an ambience of inherited warmth. While there was a positive response to India's desire to increase cooperation in nuclear energy, the Russian president was specific about the condition of India's cooperation with the expectations of the Nuclear Suppliers Group and of the United States of America. It is important for India to expand its nuclear energy facilities, for electricity from oil, gas or coal may become increasingly difficult to acquire in the future. For the cooperation of Russia in this respect, India would need to separate its military and civilian nuclear facilities. Russia's supply of fuel to the Kudankulam facility had stalled on the objections of other members of the NSG. This time, a partnership in this sector, perhaps going even beyond Kudankulam, could be hinted at because of the commitments India has made in the joint statement with the US in July. This is almost a fable of the path that the relationship between India and Russia would take in a changed world. It was important for the Indian defense minister to make clear that India's newfound closeness with the US and its military suppliers would not lessen Russia's presence as the dominant supplier in this sector. Militarily, Russia and India both have an interest in keeping a joint eye on China. The slow development of an Indian-American area of understanding is gradually forging greater comfort regarding Pakistan. A renewed understanding

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with Russia would consolidate the comfort, especially with regard to China.."

7. "RUSSIAN OVERTURE" editorial in December 09 Chennai based independent English daily THE HINDU BUSINESS LINE:"THE "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" between India and Russia is based wholly on the ties that blossomed during the Cold War, when

the Kremlin responded to New Delhi's overtures to further its larger geo-political interests. That setting has changed today, but the psychological burden (particularly on the Russian side) remains, preventing the conversion of ties to one based on the usual parameters of economic competition and comparative advantage. Take, for example, Defense cooperation. It grew out of Cold War imperatives, and it is this past which holds the key to the current problem of "protecting" Russian technology in the manufacture of critical Defense items. In a sense, it also measures the steady development of India's manufacturing base and expertise to a point where joint production of Defense items is seen to be more efficient from the Indian point of view than the earlier system of importing equipment wholesale. In fact, the past few years have seen growing tension between the two countries on the issue of transfer of Defense technology, which is why the signing of an intellectual property rights agreement on military hardware secrets during the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow should be seen as a critical enabling provision for closer cooperation. The Defense relationship will be at the core of the "strategic partnership" between the two countries mainly because of the high dependence of Indian military hardware on Russian designs and spares. The future of the other spur of the special relationship - civil nuclear energy cooperation - is not all that secure for in recent years Moscow has become far more mindful of abiding by the rules set by the Nuclear Suppliers' Group. During Dr Manmohan Singh's visit, the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, openly toed the US line on separation of military and civilian facilities of the Indian nuclear program. The issue is important for India not only because of the plans to set up more nuclear power reactors with Russian help but also to keep open the fuel supply lines for Tarapur - an issue that has somewhat soured India-Russia relations. But however, it is in healthier trade ties that the future of the India-Russia special relationship lies, a sphere where progress has been "anomalous", to quote Dr Manmohan Singh while referring to the current annual trade turnover of \$1.9 billion. As he pointed out, not only was the trade exchange in traditional spheres such as tea, tobacco, textiles and leather vegetating, if not declining, concerted efforts had not been

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made to expand India's exports of applied technology, IT and telecommunication products, auto components, or gems and jewellery. While all this cannot happen overnight, Moscow enjoys a big advantage with an investible corpus of Rs. 13,000 crore (the funds generated by the erstwhile rupee-rouble trade arrangement) which Russian companies wanting to establish a trading presence in India can readily use. Briefly, not everything is hunky-dory between the two countries. As the continuing differences over the issue of "geographical indications" and the lack of adequate visas for businessmen suggest, New Delhi cannot lower its guard against Russia while bargaining for the best economic deal."

8. "RUSSIA SOUNDS GOOD" editorial in December 09 Bangalore based independent English daily VIJAY TIMES: "The India-Russia summit meeting in Moscow this week on Tuesday appears to have been more fruitful than last year's in New Delhi from President Vladimir Putin's position on India's search for partners to fuel a civilian nuclear program. Till now, the US was expected to argue India's case with the NSG, but at the last meeting where the issue was raised, Washington's

representative had not pursued the matter in a convincing manner. \$While it may be premature to feel overtly optimistic, although all this remains in the realm of possibility, a new dimension to Indo-Russian ties cannot be ruled out either if both countries actively pursue an agenda that is mutually beneficial. At the same time, India must bear in mind that an energetic Russian response to India's request for nuclear assistance is unlikely to be greeted with cheer. Nuclear cooperation is not only about nonproliferation politics and strategic relationships, it is also, and perhaps more importantly, about technology and fuel sales amounting to billions of dollars. It would be nave to believe that US professed interest in promoting India's case for nuclear supplies is entirely altruistic. Hence, it is incumbent on the government to proceed on bilateral arrangements independent of the Indo-US agreement of July 18 in the most cautious manner and even tap Britain and France."

----- INDIA AND ITER -----

9. "INDIA IN ITER:ALL-ROUND SUPPORT HELPED," analysis in the December 9 centrist THE HINDU by R. Ramachandran. "U.S. officials - and some Indian media commentators - have been all too quick to say that the U.S. has delivered on one of its promises in the July 18 Indo-U.S. nuclear deal. It is,

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of course, true that the U.S. support was necessary for India's entry as India's bid could have been easily torpedoed by the U.S. by voting against the proposal at the ITER negotiations in Jeju, South Korea. But so was the support of each of the other five partners to the project - the European Union, Russia, China, Japan, and South Korea - because decisions at ITER Negotiations are by consensus. There are no proliferation concerns in pure fusion research such as ITER, and so India's admission should not have posed any problem in principle ... Firstly, it needs to be pointed out that the U.S. has not been a permanent member of the ITER project and its commitment to the project continues to be in doubt. The U.S.' itinerant position has been dictated by its domestic politics of funding its own department of energy's fusion project ... While the explicit statement of U.S. support to India's participation in ITER in the Indo-US agreement may have had the important effect of the ITER Committee arriving at the decision quickly, to give the entire credit to the U.S. is misplaced. A whole lot of groundwork that had been done both by India and the EU well before July 18 made this possible."

INDO-U.S. RELATIONS

10. "WHY IS SHYAM SHARAN CONTEMPLATING SUBMISSION TO AMERICA?" Op-ed article by columnist Hemantkumar Shah in the December 9, 2005, Mumbai-edition of the centrist Gujarati daily GUJARATMITRA. "How much will Indo-U.S. relations be strengthened? That topic is being greatly debated in India. There is a belief among the think-tanks that the U.S. will help India emerge as a strong and powerful nation in the 21st century. Indian politicians have a lot of expectations from the U.S. in this regard. They fail to realize that this is nothing but an illusion. One needs to understand that U.S. foreign policy revolves around two factors: firstly, that America is always concerned about its security, and its own safety is paramount when it comes to designing its foreign policy, and secondly, that it is always vigilant about the balance of power at the international and regional levels. Will America accept India's proximity when it comes to taking decisions while considering these two factors? On the contrary, at present the U.S. is putting all its weight behind Pakistan just to check India's growth in South Asia. The U.S. expects that Pakistan will one day nab dreaded terrorist Osama bin Laden. However, it conveniently forgets Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in Kashmir. How can India then be America's strategic partner? Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran,

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while speaking at the World Economic Forum, said that India and the U.S. can work towards balancing power equations in South Asia. This is nothing but just building castles in the air.. It is imperative for India not to rely only on the U.S., but to take steps that best serve its interests.."

----- INDO-PAK RELATIONS AND KASHMIR -----

11. "A CASE OF PEACE TALKS THROUGH THE PRESS?," analysis in the December 9 centrist THE HINDU by B. Muralidhar Reddy.

a. "For some time now, the Pakistani establishment and large sections of the media have been taken with "de-militarization and self-governance" as major steps towards resolving the dispute with India over Jammu and Kashmir. The issue caught the attention of Pakistan's media after its Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, spoke on November 20 about the "proposals" to Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahamed. This was during a courtesy call by Mr. Ahamed after the international donors' conference in Islamabad to raise funds for the earthquake affected. The next day it was the main story in most of the Pakistani papers ... Pakistan's latest claims are a reflection of President Pervez Musharraf's pro-active approach to improving ties with India. This has been the case ever since the peace process gained momentum in January 2004 after the parleys between him and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on the sidelines of the SAARC Summit in Islamabad ... Gen. Musharraf's strategy suffers from two major flaws. Firstly, the Pakistani establishment does not appear to have done sufficient homework on the proposals before going public with them. Reports in the Pakistani media suggest the Foreign Office is burning the proverbial midnight oil in a bid to concretize the proposals ... The result is disconnect between the top and other layers of the establishment. In other words, let alone a consensus, there is little clarity in Pakistan on what Gen. Musharraf has in mind on Kashmir ... Secondly, Gen. Musharraf and his managers appear oblivious to the Indian concerns vis--vis settlement of all outstanding issues with Pakistan. The de-militarization proposal best illustrates the point. It fails to take note of the ground realities in the light of stepped up violence in Jammu and Kashmir by militant outfits. It ignores heightened Indian concerns after the serial Delhi blasts. Harping on the demilitarization theme by Islamabad is ill-timed, if not ill-conceived. Yes, Gen. Musharraf has not

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missed a single opportunity to make a passionate appeal to various sections in the Indian Government and society for help on arriving at a solution to the Kashmir issue. But he has been fighting shy of addressing or appealing to the militant outfits.

b. "The grievance of Gen. Musharraf's managers vis--vis New Delhi is that the latter has done precious little even in terms of coming out with innovative ideas on resolution of f

Kashmir. They accuse India of going back to the theme of cross-border infiltration and terrorism infrastructure across the border every time the Kashmir issue crops up in the dialogue process. Fair enough. But why does Gen. Musharraf not extend his pro-active approach to helping India take on the militants, aided by a section of the Pakistani establishment, who are hell bent on wrecking the peace process? Given Gen. Musharraf's understanding of the complexity of the issue and various dimensions, why is Pakistan rushing with proposals at a time when it is engaged in dialogue with India? What purpose does it serve other than giving a wrong impression of some dramatic progress on Kashmir when there is no such indication?"

12. "ISLAMIST LOSING GROUND IN VALLEY," analysis in the December 9 pro-BJP right-of-center THE PIONEER by P.N. Khera.

a. "Even as Syed Salahuddin, the chairman of the United Jihad Council, the umbrella organisation carrying terrorist activities in Jammu & Kashmir, rejected Army Chief General JJ Singh's offer of absorbing those who surrender to the Indian Army, his command structure seems to be disintegrating. After all, it is the Kashmiris who are providing accurate information to the security forces about the hideouts and presence of terrorists in the Valley. It was on the basis of specific 'actionable intelligence' that a joint team of the Rashtriya Rifles and the Jammu & Kashmir police interrupted a meeting between a Hizbul Mujahideen district commander and two other terrorists in a shepherd's shelter in the Mahore area ... In an even more significant raid, the Army uncovered a sophisticated communication centre operated by an ex-Serviceman, who had been sacked for indiscipline after eight years of service. Mohammad Razzak, 45, and his father Mir Hussain of Selwa in the Mehndar tehsil of Poonch were not at home when the Army walked into his home and uncovered the satellite phone system hidden in an almirah. The hideout was very well stocked with communication systems and weapons ... Giving the lie to the claim by the head of the United Jihad Council and the

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founder of Hizbul Mujahideen, which is operating in Jammu & Kashmir, that there will not be any "sell out", three militants - after receiving jihadi training in one of the training camps run by the Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence in PoK - expressed their desire to surrender to the Indian Army.

b. "In the meantime, the security forces arrested a Pakistani national from village Ballian in Nowshera tehsil of Rajouri district. He has been sent for questioning. The arrest only vindicated the critics who question the credential of Islamabad on the latter's war against terrorism. While dismissing the Army chief's suggestion to

militants to lay down their arms and join the mainstream, Salahuddin, who also heads the Hizbul Mujahideen, the single largest indigenous militant group operating in Jammu & Kashmir, said: "For the past 58 years, India has been trying to hush up the Kashmir issue. But they (India) will never succeed in it." On November 21, at Charunda in Uri near the LoC, General JJ Singh appealed to the militants to abjure violence and join the mainstream ... General Singh said that those militants who surrender and adopt the path of peace and reconciliation would be absorbed in the armed forces. The Army chief further observed that militancy had only ruined the lives of people of the State. "The gun has brought only death and destruction in Jammu & Kashmir. There will be peace and progress in the State only when the militancy ends. Let us all resolve to move on the path of peace and prosperity," the General added."

13. "THE OTHER FACE OF THE EVIL THAT IS LASHKAR," analysis in the December 9 centrist THE HINDU by Praveen Swami. "On the afternoon of November 14, Butt threw a grenade at police personnel near the Palladium Cinema in Srinagar's Lal Chowk and then hid out in a hotel building hoping to ambush the senior officials he knew would arrive soon afterwards. Two Central Reserve Police Force personnel and two civilians were killed in the attack, and 17 persons, including a Japanese photo-journalist, Takeshi Sakuragi, were seriously injured in the Lashkar-e-Taiba fidayeen squad attack. By early the next morning, a crack Jammu and Kashmir Police commando unit had succeeded in eliminating Butt's comrade in arms, who he knew only by his Lashkar-assigned nom de guerre, Abu Furqan. Unable to execute his mission, the 19-year-old Butt attempted to escape through the back of the hotel and was arrested - which is why he is known today by his real name instead of lying in an unmarked grave, identified in records as Abu Sumama ... Butt is the other face of the Lashkar: a desperately poor

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villager who joined the jihad in Jammu and Kashmir for no real reason other than the Pakistani Rs.35,000 the organisation paid to his family ... Abu Khubair arrived in Mansoorabad in mid-2003, a young Faislabad resident who had joined the Lashkar some years earlier and returned to work as a recruiter for the organisation after a tour of duty in Jammu and Kashmir. Abu Khubair had everything Butt aspired for: a job that seemed suffused with purpose and adventure; respectability in the community; above all, cash in hand. For the first time in life, Butt thought he could see a way out of his problems. Soon after he volunteered to join the Lashkar, Butt was despatched for a three-month daura, or training course, at the Dar-ul-Andlus camp, a three-hour walk across the mountains from Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir. A former Pakistan Army soldier, Javed Iqbal, taught several dozen recruits basic combat skills, including the use of pistols, grenades, and assault rifles. Iqbal also focused on improving the physical skills of his students through long-distance hikes and drills.

b. "Much of the training--wQq+wt<sQZSinally received instructions to report to a Lashkar launching camp near the

Line of Control in the Dudhniyal sector ... If Butt had succeeded in making good his escape from Lal Chowk, and made his way back to Rajwar and then across the LoC, it is possible he would serve, as Abu Khubair did, as a recruiter for the Lashkar ... His action at the Lal Chowk could lead to his conviction on murder charges, which carry a life term. Given the fact that he is a Pakistani national, and has no friends in India, he is unlikely to receive the quality of legal assistance that could lead to a mitigation of the sentence. Even after his release, past experience shows, Pakistan is unlikely to accept him back, unless his family in Pakistan is able to produce documentation that establishes his nationality."

PAKISTAN

14. "A RELIGIOUS LUMPEN PROLETARIAT," oped in December 9 centrist THE STATESMAN by columnist Jonathan Power: "Tightening the noose on Islamic seminaries or madrasas, Pervez Musharraf promulgated an ordinance prohibiting these institutions from teaching or publishing literature which promotes militancy, sectarianism and religious hatred. This should please both the Americans and the British who have long been convinced as Colin Powell put it, that 'the

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madrasas are a breeding ground for fundamentalists and terrorists'. Some of the suicide bombers who exploded the bombs on the London transport system.were educated in Pakistani madrasas and London has been leaning on Islamabad to close down the more extremist ones. There is no doubt that militant madrasas abound in Pakistan. Too many observers who know the country well and who know what's what in Pakistani education have seen first hand the preaching and indoctrination of hatred by clerics, creating a class of religious lumpen proletariat . It is right that the government is now pushing for registration of the madrasas, watching more carefully the outside money (often Saudi) that arrives to finance some of them and expelling, as it did immediately after the London bombings, some of its foreign students. But the baby should not get thrown out with the bathwater. After all, in the centuries before imperial conquest, madrasas were the major source of Islamic religious and scientific learning. Mortarboards, tassels, academic robes and rituals of the oral defense of a written thesis can all be traced back to the madrasas. By all means make them better and broader in what they teach but to seek their abolition would only be one more blow for the self-esteem and urge for self-betterment of the very poor of this fraught but, on balance, forward-looking country."

15. "HINDUS IN PAKISTAN," editorial in the December 9 pro-BJP right-of-center THE PIONEER. "The recent abduction and conversion of three Hindu girls in Pakistan clearly shows that, despite the isolated example of a Danish Kaneria playing for the country's cricket team, Hindus there are a marginalized and persecuted lot stalked constantly by insecurity. The details are shocking. The three - Reena (21), Usha (19) and Rima (17) - who lived in Karachi's Punjab Colony along with their parents and two other siblings, went missing from October 18, 2005 ... Almost immediately thereafter, the family began receiving threats and, within days, it received, through courier service,

three affidavits by the three girls stating that they had converted to Islam on their free will and wanted to live separately ... The unfolding of events has been recalled in some detail because it underlines two things. The first is the tragedy of three young girls, abducted, forcibly converted and made to live in the hostel of a madarsa - where no one knows what is being done to them - away from their parents and siblings. The second is the reminder they provide of the continuing persecution of minorities - mainly Hindus, Christians and Ahmadiyyas - in Pakistan who live hunted and terrorized lives in the shadow of the threats of prosecution under the Blasphemy Act which carries a death

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penalty, desecration of their shrines, forcible conversions and physical violence. All civilized Governments must pressure Pakistan to have the three girls restored to their parents, punish their abductors and provide an environment in which the minorities can live in peace and honor. The Government of India and the human rights organizations in this country, which have been hyper-active in defence of minority rights and condemnation of "communal" elements, have a bounden duty to take up the case of the three girls and minority rights with Pervez Musharraf's regime - and in all international fora should it prove unresponsive ... Silence and inaction on the ground that it is Pakistan's internal matter and making an issue of it will have an adverse bearing on India-Pakistan relations which are on the threshold of a stunning improvement, will not wash."

Mulford

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